



Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration
et du statut de réfugié du Canada

Canada



Français

Home

Contact Us

Help

Search

canada.gc.ca

Issue Papers, Extended Responses and Country Fact Sheets

[Home](#)

Extended Response to Information Request

RUS32253.EX

24 August 1999

Russia: Update on the Situation of Jews

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

INTRODUCTION

This Extended Response to Information Request is based on interviews conducted in Moscow in May and June 1999 on the situation of Jews in Russia. Some information has been added from documentary evidence that was available in Moscow at the time of the interviews. The interviewees represent secular and religious viewpoints and include individuals from groups designed to assist Jewish emigration as well as organizations that aim to strengthen Jewish culture and presence in Russia. A representative of the country's Human Rights Commission also provided information on that organization's work in this area. Individuals from two broadly-mandated human rights organizations indicated that the situation of Jews in Russia is not a current issue for them (Petrov 20 May 1999; Podrobinek 31 May 1999).

Several interviewees made comments about the context within which the issue of Russia's Jewish population should be examined. First, some sources cited the country's poor economic conditions as creating a climate that, in general, allows human rights abuses to be perpetrated (Civic Assistance Committee n.d., 1-2; Terlitsky 18 May 1999; Goldschmid 17 May 1999; Golenpolsky 25 May 1999). William Smirnov, a member of the Presidential Human Rights Commission, stated that these concerns are so acute that violations of the social and economic rights of Russians have been the focus of the commission's recent work (18 June 1999).

Official figures stated that prior to August 1998, when the government defaulted on its international loans and allowed the ruble to devalue substantially, 22 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line; now that figure has increased significantly, according to the non-governmental organization, Civic Assistance Committee (n.d., 1-2). Tancred Golenpolsky, editor of *The Jewish Gazette*, stated that the country was becoming "pauperized," particularly in the provinces; Moscow, he pointed out, has an extremely high percentage of all the money circulating in Russia (25 May 1999). Pensions for the country's ageing population are somewhat less than 380 rubles per month; a Russian who, prior to the August 1998 financial crisis was making the equivalent of US\$65 would now be earning less than US\$20 (ibid.). Furthermore, people in the provinces might receive their pensions only once every three or four months. Salaried individuals frequently receive their pay on a sporadic basis (ibid.).